

My name is Barbara Rush and I am a 30 year retired teacher from the Helena public schools. There is a lot of information out there on Common Core Standards and it is hard to know where to start, but let me start with this, this is a quote from Joseph Califano, former head of HEW, "Control over curriculum is control over thought." I guess that is why every form of dictatorship takes control over schools. Do you people, as legislators for the State of Montana, want to cede control over our school curricula to the Federal Government?

Let's talk about where these standards come from. The Melinda and Bill Gates foundation along with the Charles Johnson foundation provided the major funding. The State Governors Association along with the Association of State School Chiefs provided supervision. A group of selected teachers and education experts then provided the expertise. President Obama offered grants amounting to 4.8 billion dollars under his Race to the Top program, which was funded out of the stimulus monies for school districts that would comply with a curriculum connected to other states. This was his first requirement for the money. Many states were struggling to meet requirements for No Child Left Behind (they couldn't pass the tests) and were about to face school closures and teachers firings so they desperately needed waivers. President Obama offered these waivers to relieve them of No Child Left Behind mandates, but again the first requirement was that they join a curriculum connected to other states. Forty-eight states, including Montana have buckled under this pressure and are now implementing Common Core. At least two states are already regretting their decision and are attempting to withdraw, Massachusetts and Utah. Bill Clinton tried for a national curriculum in the early nineties and was rejected by the legislature. President Obama apparently has a new tactic. The General Education Protection Act (GEPA) enacted in 1979 when the new Department of Education was established specifically prohibits federal government takeover of school policy and curriculum. The law enacting the Department of Education also prohibits it. You know what they say about a duck, if it quacks like a duck and it looks like a duck, it's a duck. The Obama administration is enacting a national curriculum under Common Core and the parents, school boards and the public are counting on you to stop this egregious attempt to federalize our schools.

Now let's talk about the cost. Estimates range from 16 billion dollars to 30 billion dollars in unfunded federal mandates for the Common Core. What will you get for your investment in Common Core? The best that I can tell is a lot of retread ideas that the political left has been promoting and failing at for 40 years. When the Federal Department of Education was established in 1979 they created a hue and cry with a report that said America was a "Nation at Risk", well if we were a "Nation at Risk" then we're really in trouble now because we have had no academic progress nationally since the department was established. We were showing steady progress from 1950-1970 but have shown no academic progress since that time. We have spent billions of federal dollars on education since the Federal Department Of education was established, with no academic achievement to show for it. If this doesn't convince you that federal education programs don't work let me

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tell you something else. As reported by the news media last summer, this country had the lowest SAT scores in the nation's history last year.

Here are some of the Common Core curriculum ideas. They want connectivity. This means they want to do away with teaching Geometry and Algebra separately, for example, and to go to integrated math. They have no proof that this would work. They want to go to project learning- a model that I personally think has been an abysmal failure every time it has been tried. The idea is to get kids to discuss things and come up with a hypothesis and then research and apply the research to answer a question as you do in science. The problem is that in reality the high achievers do the work and the low achievers waste their time. In fact a lot of time is wasted. Common Core wants more time spent on less material and this is what happens in project learning. The old mantra that has led us to where we are today, that kids don't need to learn so much information, is still out there. I wouldn't want those students to be my doctor. In my view any kind of thinking, whether it's critical or creative, takes a lot of information to be effective.

My suggestion to you is that we save a lot of money and our schools by directing our State Board of Education to get Montana out of Common Core. Give our school boards, parents and teachers the freedom to decide what curriculum they think is best. Then if the Common Core comes up with anything that actually works, which I highly doubt, we can implement any part of it that we as Montanans think will work in our schools.

Thank you for your time and for listening to my comments. I'm sorry I couldn't be here today but I have listed my email below and would be more than happy to answer any questions you have to the best of my ability.

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